

Telephone Scam

Do not respond to emails, phone calls, or web pages that tell you to call an "809", "284", or "876" area code phone number. This is part of a scam that has been identified by the National Fraud Information Center and has cost victims a lot of money.

Below is an email we recently received from Verizon (obtained from AT&T) alerting of the scam.

Subject: Alert on Area Code 809, 284 and 876 Calls
Do not respond to emails, phone calls, or web pages that tell you to call an "809", "284", or "876" area code phone number. This is part of a scam that has been identified by the National Fraud Information Center and is costing victims a lot of money.

There are a number of different permutations of this scam.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

You will receive a message on your answering machine or your pager, which asks you to call a number beginning with area code 809. The reason you're asked to call varies. It can be to receive information about a family member who has been ill, to tell you someone has been arrested, died, to let you know you have won a wonderful prize, etc. In each case, you are told to call the 809 number right away. Since there are so many new area codes these days, people unknowingly return these calls.

If you call from the US, you will apparently be charged \$2425 per-minute. Or, you'll get a long recorded message. The point is, they will try to keep you on the phone as long as possible to increase the charges. Unfortunately, when you get your phone bill, you'll often be charged more than \$24,100.00.

WHY IT WORKS:

The 809 area code is located in the British Virgin Islands (The Bahamas). The 809 area code can be used as a "pay-per-call" number, similar to 900 numbers in the U.S. Since 809 is not in the US, it is not covered by U.S. regulations of 900 numbers, which require that you be notified and warned of charges and rates involved when you call a pay-per-call" number.

There is also no requirement that the company provide a time period during which you may terminate the call without being charged. Further, whereas many U.S. homes that have 900 number blocking to avoid these kinds of charges, it does not work in preventing calls to the 809 area code.

We recommend that no matter how you get the message, if you are asked to call a number with an 809 area code that you don't recognize, just disregard the message.

Be wary of e-mail, or calls, asking you to call an 809 area code number. It's important to prevent becoming a victim of this scam, since trying to fight the charges afterwards can become a real nightmare. That's because you did actually make the call. If you complain, both your local phone company and your long distance carrier will not want to get involved and will most likely tell you that they are simply providing the billing for the foreign company. You'll end up dealing with a foreign company that argues they have done nothing wrong.

“New Scam Threatens Seniors” reported in November 2003 issue of “Silver Bulletin”

Beware of calls at night telling seniors to sign up for the Federal Trade Commission's 'do not call list,' or to continue dealing with annoying telemarketing calls. The Federal Trade Commission is not going to register you for the 'do not call' list.

“Telling people you are not interested” reported in November 2003 issue of “Silver Bulletin”

Just politely tell the caller that your household has a policy not to accept solicitations over the phone. Ask them to mail information to you. Don't be pressured into an immediate response or giving any personal information (don't give social security number, credit card information, etc.). If they continue to pressure you, say Mahalo! And hang up...they are being rude, not you!